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Dr. R. G. E. Murray
Faculty of Medicine
The University of Western Ontario
London, Canada

Dear Bob: ^{Ontario}

To yours of the 20th.

I appreciate that you really do not have too much time for planning the next Congress of Microbiology. I share what I think is your diffidence about going into genetic microbiology in too specialized a fashion. From the point of view of the speakers, the Genetics Symposia at Stockholm were by no means the most interesting part of the program. It is possible, however, that many members of the Congress might feel cheated if they did not have an opportunity to bring themselves up to date on this vital aspect of microbial research. Whether the Congress should have quite so didactic a function is something of a question. I very definitely agree that the genetics, rather than the microbiology, congress is the place for the specialists. One topic I would seriously urge on you as most appropriate for an international symposium is Extra-terrestrial Microbiology. There are vitally important issues of policy in connection with the exploration of space concerning which microbiologists should be much better informed than they are at the present time and to which they can make vital contributions. It would be especially appropriate if scientists from both sides of the Iron Curtain can have this opportunity of sharing their views. By the time of the Congress it is, furthermore, quite conceivable that we will have more direct information of the possibility of life on Mars and Venus by space probes which are scheduled during the next two or three years. It is more than likely that the interval between 1962 and the IX Microbiology Congress will see more direct investigations of planetary microbiota through the agency of instrumented soft landings. Various official bodies have, of course, taken some cognizance of these problems (see enclosure) but this does not obviate the necessity for more vigorous and more informed participation by our fellow microbiologists. I am sure that by 1962 there will be ample material for a substantial and exciting discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg